

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, June 14. 1707.

I Have been stating the Case of the Difficulty rais'd between the Kingdoms about Trade, and the Frauds put upon us in *England*, under Colour of the Union; the Essays made to restrain them, and the Clamour at it.

I have distinguished between the Encroachers upon Trade, and the Noise they make, and the just Claim of the *Scots* to a free Trade; and really, Gentlemen, 'tis the Want of thus distinguishing makes all our Uneasinesses in this Case—No doubt, those, that are pinch'd here, cry out the Union, the Union, tho' the Business is *Diana*, *Diana*; our Wine and Brandy is in Danger, and the Union is the Colour.

The *Scots* are the best Explainers of this, ask them a few Questions.

Quest. What is it, Gentlemen, you desire?

Ans. A Freedom to carry our Goods into *England* according to the 4th Article of the Treaty, which grants *Scotland* a free Intercourse of Trade.

Quest. Well, but here are a World of Goods brought in by other People, on purpose to defraud the Government; what will you do with them, will you protect them under the Pretence of the Union, and call them yours?

Ans. No, not we; allow the proper Goods of *Scots* Men, and we have all we demand; for the rest, do as the Laws of *England* direct, we are content, we do not desire *England* should be abus'd, much less will we encourage it.

This, I assure you, is now the common Language of *Scotland*, and I can see no Reason to object against it on any Account, whatever my own Opinion is in the Case.

I come now to the chief and most essential Fraud, and which indeed I meet with no Body in the *North*, but what cries out upon it as a horrible and unsufferable Cheat, and every Body is willing here to have it recover'd and redress'd, and this is the Drawback, than which I know no greater or more barefaced Cheat ever practis'd with Impunity in any Nation in the World.

The Tobacco, which paying a great Duty of near 6 *d.* per Pound in *England*, is one of the best and most Capital Articles of the *English* Customs, has yet to encourage Trade, encrease the Consumption, support and enlarge our Plantations, and enable the Merchant to export it again into foreign Parts, a Law made to repay the Exporter all the said Duty, except about one Half-penny per Pound—The Exporter, as far as possible, both by Bond and Oath to secure the Government, that the said Tobacco so exported, and on which such Allowance is made, shall not be reloaded again into *England* or *Wales*.

Upon the Union, and the literal Sence of the free Intercourse of Trade mention'd in the 4th Article, a vast Quantity of this Tobacco is exported from *England* to *Scotland*, Debentures granted to the Exporter for drawing back the Duty as above, as exported to a foreign Country; so far 'tis regular.

In the Juncture of this Exportation, this foreign Country, call'd *Scotland*, by the intervening Accident of the Union, becomes the same Home-Country with *England*, and is now become but one *Britain*; by which Union, and a Capitulation for a free Intercourse of Commerce, the Tobacco so exported is really at Home again, that is, free to be carry'd from Place to Place throughout *Britain*, without Interruption, without Payment or Demand.

This is the Letter of the Union, as I call it, and as in general Prospect it has been construed to be—This is what the Merchant sets up as a *Non obstante*, to the Oaths and Bonds of the Exportation—And by this they claim to bring the same Tobacco back again to the Place from whence it came, and so merely pick the QUEEN's Pocket of the 5*d.* per Pound drawn back by Debenture—On Pretence of the Union.

The Fraud of this has the particular Circumstance of being very open and barefaced, and has the Happiness of being so manifest a Cheat, that even the Actors in it acknowledge it to be a Fraud.

Pray, Gentlemen, let me ask one Question here; do you think, the Scots will be uneasie at any Endeavours in *England* to prevent this Mischief? Do you believe *Scotland* will concern it self at all to protect this Abuse?

Indeed, whoever entertains such an Opinion of our *Northern Britain*, do them a great Deal of Wrong; they are far from desiring, any thing so hard should be put upon *England* under Shelter of their Articles, and they exclaim as loudly at the notorious Fraud, as any Body can do in *London*.

Had an Act been offer'd to restrain that Liberty in the Parliament of *Scotland* before their Dissolution, I dare say, it would have met with a ready Compliance; and had the *English* Parliament made an Act separately for the Restraint of this Abuse, there would hardly have been one Mouth opened against it in all *Scotland*.

Nor, Gentlemen, are the Scots Properties at all concern'd here; for no Man can, in the ordinary Course of Trade, have sent for Tobacco's from *England* for their Use in such Quantities, as are apparently carry'd thither; 10000 Hogheads of Tobacco are not sent to *Scotland* to be expended there, and the ordinary Course of Trade was only for the common Expence there; the Property of Scots Men therefore cannot be concern'd in this, since what is expended in *Scotland*, can by no means be Part of the Fraud, 'tis only what is sent back again into *England*.

This Fraud has two other Mischiefs in it. First, If it must be expended in *Scotland*, 'tis so much above the Expence of *Scotland*, that the Price there must sink, and so injure the fair Trader, who purchased purely for the common Course of Trade; and secondly, if it goes back to *England*, the QUEEN is not only abus'd and cheated of the Customs; but the Merchants who have Tobacco's in *England* before, are under-sold

sold by these E.-importers, and the Market consequently sunk, and so the fair Traders are under an inevitable Loss.

I confess, I did not foresee all this Mystery of Mischief, and once was of the Opinion, the Advantage of shipping Tobacco was upb the Square, and propos'd an Essay of that Nature to a Friend; and I note it here, that I may not be charg'd with writing against what I propos'd my self—But I soon saw farther into it, and have since declined several Offers of being concern'd in it, as a thing contrary to all Manner of Honesty and fair Trading.

But my present Design of mentioning this Case is, to assure the World, *Scotland once so called*, has very little if any Concern in this Cheat; they universally cry out, it ought to be detested, and they are content with any Methods, that can be legally found out for the preventing it.

I could descend here to some Steps, which might yet be taken to disappoint that complicated Fraud; but I am not called here to give Schemes for the Duty of those Offices, I doubt not, some Method will be thought upon to prevent it yet, and the true Intent and Meaning of the Union entirely preserv'd.

It is a Scandal upon the *Scots* to charge the Frauds and Subtilties of tricking Merchants upon their Nation and the Union; they seek and they claim all the just Advantages of a free Intercourse of Trade, and they ought to have them, and they must have them; but when, Gentlemen, you of the *South* come in with your Custom-house Frauds, and the Leger-de-main of Trade, when you put the Dice upon your Neighbours, and cheat the QUEEN under their Names, do not be angry, if I tell you plainly, the Cheat is all your own, and they have no hand in it, and do not blame them, if they disown it, and you in it; if they insist upon the Union being construed to protect you, and fairly quit you to the common Justice of the Law; indeed, indeed, you can expect no other.

O but the Union! —Then cries the High-Flying Merchant, who perhaps having curst the Union a thousand times before, and flown in the Face of his Masters, as well as of his Neighbours upon that Ac-

count—Now is for having it protect him, in abusing his Sovereign and cheating both Nations. *O the Union!* says he, *the Union is broke.*

Truly, Gentlemen, you have been the first Invaders of the Union, in making it a Colour, a Cloak, under the Shelter whereof to abuse your Country; it was never the Design of either Nation, that the Union should be a Protection to Frauds, that it should be the Foundation of destroying Trade, injuring the Merchant, and cheating the QUEEN; neither side had any View of this in the Union, and therefore those Gentlemen, who taking Advantage of a littoral Construction of Words, have invaded the true Intent and Meaning of the Union; these have broke the Articles, if they are broke at all, and without doubt the QUEEN has an equitable Right to claim, or in the Language of the Law, Her Majesty may have Relief in Chancery against them, and I must own, I think, the Methods of preventing the Mischief are still very plain and easie; of which hereafter.

I must be allow'd therefore to think, the Distinction here very useful; The Case of the Drawbacks is quite different from the Importation of *French* Goods, and I need not go back to describe them, the Property of native *Scots* is concern'd in one, and I could heartily wish, to avoid Clamours and Chastisings, that Case were entirely left, of which I have been particular enough; but in this the *Scots* are not at all concern'd, nor the Union; the Fraud is our own, practis'd by our selves upon our selves, and as the De-Test does not affect them, neither will the Remedy.

If the *Scots* are any way affronted here, it is at the Actors, and they ought really to resent it, that any Body should practise a Trade so openly immoral, and of which they make their Profits perfectly remote from them, *for the Gain is wholly out of the English Customs*, and then call it all by their Neighbours Name; 'tis like getting a Wench with Child, and then lay the Bastard at another Man's Door; 'tis like robbing a House, and then cry stop Thief; in this the *Scots* are eminently abus'd, the Union made a *Stale*, a meer stalking-Horse, to cove